THE
ULSTER MEDICAL JOURNAL

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY ON BEHALF OF THE ULSTER MEDICAL SOCIETY

VOL. VIII 1st JANUARY, 1939 No. 1

In the By-ways of Medicine

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Presidential Address, delivered before the Ulster Medical Society, 3rd November, 1938

"EACH man's memory," says Aldous Huxley, "is his private literature, and every recollection affects us with something of the penetrative force of a work of art."

Among the early recollections of my childhood are a springtime dose of electuary, and seeing Sequah. The advice and the formula for the electuary were furnished by friends—needless to say not mine—and I believe the sticky mess was composed of treacle, cream of tartar, and flowers of sulphur. Then there was Sequah. Sequah was a large and imposing man with a powerful voice, a confident manner, and fluent in a strong American accent. He travelled round the town with a small but lusty brass band in a two-horse wagonette, and when he had attracted a sufficient crowd he drew up at a suitable corner and proclaimed in a long harangue the virtues of his Prairie Flower, a medicament of unparalleled value. He also guaranteed painless dentistry, but whether his promises were fulfilled we never, to the sorrow of our young hearts, could find out; as at the crucial moment the band always made its best effort and the victim would never tell.

Probably Sequah's greatest triumph was at a place in the south of Ireland, where one of his patients became such a valuable advertisement that he built him a little house and offered £5 for the best short poem suitable for painting over the door. The prize was won by a policeman for the following :—

"Here I lived and suffered pain,
Thought I'd never walk again;
Sequah, one day passing by,
Saw me suffer, made me try
Sequah's oil and prairie flower;
Now I live in Sequah's bower."

Since then I have seen other quacks, not so picturesque perhaps, but equally blatant, and have learned of other domestic remedies or folk-medicines esteemed for disorders which are not so serious as to require the attentions of a doctor; such as decoction of dandelion root for digestive trouble, infusion of chamomile flowers for feverishness, and a preparation of horehound and honey for coughs. I remember when it was no uncommon practice in Belfast for mothers whose children were suffering from whooping-cough to take them for a walk in the neighbourhood of the gas-works, where the condition of the air was supposed to be beneficial; but I have not heard of the custom of late, it may be that industrial chemistry has become so perfectly conservative that not even the smell of what was once a waste product is now allowed to escape. One of our members has quite recently recounted her own experiences as a patient undergoing this cure.

A somewhat macabre case was once related to me of a Tyrone doctor who lived about the middle of the nineteenth century. The story goes that a soldier, who had returned home from the Crimean war suffering from a skin complaint for which he had been unable to obtain any effective remedy, consulted the doctor, who prescribed that he should strip himself naked and encase himself in the skin of a freshly slaughtered bullock and have himself buried up to the neck for some hours in a pit in the ground; the procedure is said to have been followed by a speedy cure.

Treatment of illness by other than purely material means is widespread though not prevalent throughout Ireland; and many of you may have a greater knowledge of these quasi-magical methods of charming than I have. The charms consist in the performance of some act and the observance of some rite with or without an incantation. Lady Wilde, the wife of a fashionable Dublin oculist of the last century, collected and published many of these charms; and Dr. Eileen Hickey, in the last number of our Journal which appeared a few days ago, describes several in a very interesting fashion.

The latter mentions the part played by a donkey in the performance of a therapeutic charm for whooping-cough. One of a prophylactic nature in which the ass takes a part was narrated to me about a week ago by an ecclesiastical dignitary whose father was rector of a remote parish in County Monaghan some sixty years ago. He told me that he and all his brothers and sisters except one were stripped naked by their old nurse and passed three times over and under the body of a female ass in the name of the Trinity while the ass was given a piece of bread to eat, the crumbs which fell from the animal's mouth being put in the mouths of the children. And he said that what had chiefly impressed the ceremony on his mind was the apparent success of the charm; for all the family except the boy who had not undergone this process of magical immunisation escaped the common ailments of childhood, while he contracted all the usual infectious diseases.

Even the harness of an ass is employed in some charms; for instance, as a cure for mumps a donkey's winkers are put on the head of the patient while he is led three times round a spring well. A former Member of Parliament for Tyrone told me that the country people living near him sometimes came to his house and asked

permission to perform this charm in a scullery where it was possible to perambulate round a running tap. Care, however, has to be exercised by all the persons at the ceremony that silence is observed; for if anyone should laugh while it is in progress, the disease will pass to him.

One of the numerous charms for warts is to rub on the warts nine knots of straw, wrap the knots in a piece of paper and drop the package on the road, when the warts will be transferred to the finder. It is noteworthy that Marcellus, a fourth century physician of Bordeaux, described a similar cure, using pebbles instead of straw and an ivy leaf instead of paper. This same Marcellus was evidently as good at business as he was at medicine. His cure for a tumour was to cut a root of vervain in two and hang one piece round the patient's neck and the other over his own fireplace; as the latter dried up the tumour shrank, but if the patient forgot to pay his fee, Marcellus threw his piece into water, and as the root swelled up again the tumour reappeared.

You, like myself, may have seen a strip of eel-skin applied as a bandage to cure a sprain. It is hard to say what its curative properties were supposed to depend upon, but the treatment may have had its origin in imitative magic, as the eel is a very supple fish.

In the old churchyard at Raymunterdoney in Donegal there lies flat an immense stone cross with the base separate from the shaft. The story is that the cross was carved for St. Columcille to erect on Tory Island, but that a boat big enough to take it from the mainland could not be found. The belief is held locally that a piece of earth taken through the hole in the base is an infallible cure for toothache if applied to the seat of the pain; and the gap in the ground beneath indicates that the belief is not infrequently put into practice. Not only in the churchyard soil, but in the plants growing in it, is there reputed power, for a decoction of nettles gathered in a churchyard is believed to be a cure for dropsy.

Reputed cures of a general character are associated with the holy wells of which there are so many throughout Ireland. Often a votive offering is left by the suppliant, but few are of such an intimately personal nature as at St. Bride's Well in County Cork, where the visitants seeking relief from their dolours cut off tresses of their hair and fasten them to the thorn bush which overhangs the well.

This country is rich in mystic customs, believed in firmly or loosely or altogether discredited, according to the vein of superstition in the individual. The observance of the majority of these practices is designed to avoid ill-health or ill-luck generally; they consist in an act, a form of words, or the wearing of an amulet. Such beliefs may be considered as foibles or whims and regarded with tolerant amusement or indulgent incredulity; but they nevertheless in moments of reflection arouse speculation as to their origin. The majority of us do not willingly walk under a ladder, and few of us object to the throwing of a slipper after a newly-wedded couple unless the missile has been badly aimed. We are careful even when perfectly well to reply to the question "How are you?" by saying "Not so bad," lest an evil spirit lurking nearby might overhear and strike a blow to our health or prosperity. You will recollect the recent trial of a man living not fifty miles

from here who was accused of assaulting a neighbour, and who gave as his excuse that the neighbour had blinked his cattle. Perhaps you carry a St. Christopher mascot in your car to ensure your safety when travelling—you are by no means unique. The newspaper account of the Queen Mary's captain and his St. Christopher, by whose aid he brought his ship into dock last month, is still fresh in our minds.

I mention merely to dismiss such upstart talismans as a potato or a nutmeg carried about in the pocket, and an iodine locket at half a crown or a guaranteed one at three shillings and sixpence.

Much of our folk-medicine finds its counterpart and possibly some of its origin in antiquity; but naturally this audience will see such curiosities of therapy as these against a background of certain studies which present fashion groups together as anthropology. It is no longer enough to point to a resemblance between some old wife's cure in Ireland and an African tribal custom. It is no longer enough to derive one from the other or even to point to a common origin for both dating back in time. For the modern student of these things the controversy about Diffusionism has assumed a less simple form. It is no longer merely a question of whether civilisation had its source in one place or whether it arose spontaneously in different parts of the world, as Frazer and the older anthropologists imply. At the present time we are faced with accepting or rejecting the theory that civilisation, instead of being part of the normal biological struggle to survive, is rather the result of a deviation from an older and easier flow of life, something as yet inexplicable which made a break with man's existence at a lower level.

Amulets appear to have been originally chosen on account of their rarity or their uncommon appearance or shape, and many of the articles of modern personal adornment have had their origin in talismans.

Laban had his teraphim and Jacob his strange gods. The Egyptians of the Sixth Dynasty wore an amulet representing two eyes against the evil eye. The ancient Greeks do not appear to have used amulets to any extent; but pagan and Christian incantations, amulets, and other magic were prevalent in Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries. The beautiful Irish hymn known as St. Patrick's Breastplate is an example of a pagan charm transformed for the purposes of Christian devotion. Some of the verses even in Mrs. Alexander's modern translation, display evidences of the prophylactic and therapeutic uses of the Breastplate or Lorica:

"Against the wizard's evil craft,
Against the death-wound and the burning,
The choking wave, the poisoned shaft,
Protect me, Christ, till Thy returning."

The Lapis Variolosus, a stone with marks on its surface resembling the pitting of smallpox and found in the valley of the River Durance in Provence, was worn as a protection against the disease. Precious stones had reputed virtues, the diamond against plague and the carnelian for the blood, and the wine-coloured amethyst was worn at the symposia of ancient days so that the pleasure of drinking deeply of wine would not be marred by any subsequent crapula. Iron

finger-rings recently had some vogue in this country as a preventive of rheumatism; ancient finger-rings were reputed to have similar qualities, and some were set with stones which had their own peculiar virtues. The gold coin which accompanied the royal touch may perhaps be looked upon as an amulet.

Some amulets bore inscriptions which had their own special significance. The Jews often wore amulets engraved with texts of scripture, as for example :—

"Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night;
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;
Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness;
Nor for the destruction that wasteth by noonday."

The Syrian inscribed charms, Shebriri and Abracadabra, appear to have been both preventive and curative, the former for eye diseases and the latter for fevers; the cure being effected by the patient first pronouncing the whole word and then the remainder, dropping letter by letter. The story is told of a sixteenth century physician applying this formula to a patient, then causing him to eat the written word and pay a fee of fifteen pounds.

From a recent copy of an Indian newspaper I could quote a whole page of testimonials to a talisman sold at two rupees and eight annas, and warranted to cure everything from influenza to early decrepitude; nor are its uses solely therapeutic, as witness the testimonial of a young surgeon in a Benares hospital :—

"Your talisman, which I used myself, gave me great benefit indeed; I was a sub-assistant surgeon, and now by God's grace I am promoted to the rank of assistant surgeon. Your talisman is really a wonderful thing."

From the time when man could first count there has been a peculiar fascination in the magic of numbers, even prevailing to the present day but not altogether invested with the same mystic importance. We have the lucky numbers 7 and 3 (has this any significance in the familiar t. i. d.?), and 13 is of peculiarly sinister import: I only encountered the number 13 on a hotel bedroom door once. The ancient Chinese and Pythagoras and his pupils devoted much time and ingenuity to the philosophical consideration and the mystical application of numbers and magic squares, and amulets often bore such emblems. And Albutt observes: "Galen relied on critical days, a doctrine which if a remnant of magical numbers, was fortified by the periods of pneumonia, typhus, and malaria"; and that "Dioscorides was not free from all magic, for in recommending cinquefoil for malaria he advises the use of the three-leaved sort for tertian and the four-leaved for quartan fever."

Astrology, amulets, and numbers, with their bizarre attributes, came from the East, and spread with other branches of knowledge westwards. The practice of astrology was widespread in Europe in the fourteenth century, and formed a subject of the regular medical education till the sixteenth century, after which it waned. But there are still to be found everywhere many believers in astrology, and horoscopes are cast every day, not only for the simple and superstitious but even for persons eminent in the world of letters. Our greatest living poet, W. B. Yeats, is the author of a treatise on astrology which he calls "The Vision." Some

schools of literary criticism seem to detect in this intellectual revival of astrology an attempt to supply the political doctrine of Facism with an esoteric philosophy. Evidences of the survival of a popular interest in astrology are to be found in the columns of our newspapers and the ready sale which a well-known almanac given to prophecy commands.

A large number of the fantastic or occult theories of hygiene which have had or are having their day derive from oriental sources and are associated with astrology. Rudolf Steiner, who died some years ago but whose organisation still survives, devised a system of cosmology which he named Anthroposophy. He drew largely on Eastern notions, and features of his teaching are the stress he laid on the food value of crops planted at certain phases of the moon and his condemnation of artificial manures.

Various westernized forms of the Hindu system of Yoga are practised, often in conjunction with astrology, in England and America at the moment, and are increasing in popularity if one can judge from the output of literature on the subject and the number of well-known people who claim to have benefited by Yogic therapy. The physical features of Yoga—repose, posture, muscular exercise, and special dietary—have appealed more to its votaries in these countries than the philosophic ends for which these practices were primarily devised, and they have most interest from a medical point of view. The familiar attitude in which Buddha is usually represented is one of the Yogic postures, but there are others which suggest the professional contortionist rather than the seeker after bodily and mental health. To such an extent is the control of the muscles and groups of muscles developed by the adept that lavage of the rectum can be effected by voluntary relaxation of the sphincter ani and movements of the abdominal muscles; while cleansing and massage of the stomach can be performed by slowly swallowing as many as twenty-two feet of a three-inch bandage and gradually withdrawing it after about twenty minutes, during which the diaphragm and the recti abdominis have been kept in constant and regulated motion. Such perfection as this, which has been described by the Hindu Dr. Behanan of Yale University in his book on Yoga, is unlikely to be attained outside its country of origin where the greater part of a lifetime is often spent in acquiring proficiency.

There are still believers in the influence of the moon on lunatics; and some people do not like to catch the first glimpse of the moon through trees, but consider that their good luck is assured if they possess an old horse-shoe hung with its prongs upwards—not a very obvious association with the moon, but said to be derived from the emblem worn by the priestesses of Diana.

We physicians have discarded the use of astrology, but on more scientific grounds retain our trust in the sun, even to the extent of keeping little images of it in our consulting rooms for the treatment of patients.

The psychological influence of occult treatment on the comfort and sense of well-being of a patient is largely dependent on his faith in its efficacy. As Budge says: "A dose of medicine might be regarded as an amulet applied internally, the effect of the matter which composed the dose being supplemented by the spell

of the pagan or the prayer of the Christian; but the power and the effect of faith by the recipient cannot be over-estimated."

Even that saturnine philosopher, Thomas Carlyle, had unbounded faith in medicine, at least for other people, for it is recorded of him that on hearing of a friend's illness he took the sick man an unfinished bottle of medicine which had done his wife good, although he did not know the nature of the disease from which his friend was suffering.

Our scientific souls may wince in yielding to the request of a patient for a bottle of medicine when we know that he needs no medicine, but we may be comforted by the reflection that we are encouraging and reinforcing the will to get well.

Faith-healing has been an integral part of medicine from the earliest times; without faith one would not consult a doctor even now. It was almost the sole foundation upon which primitive medicine rested, and from time to time even since the introduction of rational medicine, faith-healing has exercised a sway to which it is not legitimately entitled: we have it on good authority that "faith without works is dead." Within our era it was fostered for centuries by Christian mysticism, nurtured by oriental magic, and stimulated by the ineptness of medieval medicine arising from lack of research and from irrational drug-therapy.

Faith-healing cults were numerous in the United States particularly about the end of the last century: one of the exponents of the art going so far as sending blessed handkerchiefs through the post, and thereby incurring the intervention and the ban of the government.

Last year when passing through Kent, by the mere accident of mistaking an address, I found myself at an Elizabethan house in a beautifully wooded demesne, where a cult of this sort flourishes. A number of elderly and very prosperous-looking ladies and gentlemen, the former wearing bright blue smocks and the latter blazers of the same cheerful tint with differently coloured crosses on the breast-pocket to indicate their function within the Society, live here and receive patients and guests. The patients are submitted to a system of healing by prayers in which five members of the society join at one time. There is also a treatment by passes performed over the organs in the patient's body which are supposed to require healing. It is preferable for the sufferers to be present for treatment by the Seekers, as they call themselves, but where this is not convenient the patient is given a number and told a time when he must retire to a secluded room in his own home so that he will be able to yield himself to the efforts of the Seekers, who will meet at the appointed hour to deal with his case. These Seekers assemble in one of the small rooms called chapels arranged in a sort of cloister about a beautifully kept garden. The out-buildings of the original mansion have been adapted for this purpose. The benevolent and obviously sincere member of the community, a retired colonel, who acts as guide to visitors, pointed out that one of the chapels was reserved for prayers about financial difficulties, because to pray for these in the chapels used for healing would disturb the "metaphysical rays." This mystified us as much as our guide's other statement that "there is nothing religious about it at all." I may add that this kindly gentleman who had re-

linquished the profession of arms for the pursuit of metaphysical rays, although he had no idea that I was a medical man, declared his admiration of the kindness and honesty of doctors, and only deplored their ignorance of the more enlightened methods of treating the sick.

There is in Belfast at the present time a society of spiritualists at the meetings of which Dr. Smithson, who practised at Greystones about the middle of the last century and is now dead, transmits through a man-medium the diagnosis of illnesses and prescribes treatments for the believers and their friends.

The laying on of hands for the exorcism of devils no doubt gave rise to the practice of the royal touch in Gaul and Spain for jaundice, plague, and insanity; and in Britain for scrofula. St. Thomas Aquinas is reported to have cured a blind man by allowing him to kiss his foot. The touch of a seventh son was formerly held in Ireland to be effective against many maladies. We all know the esteem in which the doctor with the "lucky hand" is held throughout our country for attendance on women in childbirth.

St. Augustine in the fifth century attributed all diseases of Christians to demons; and as late as the seventeenth century Charles II of Spain insisted on his confessor and two friars sitting by his bedside while he slept, to keep away demons.

According to the "Annals of the Four Masters," the plague which broke out in Connacht in 1084 was blamed on demons from the north.

In England until about a century ago a wheel-like instrument was used in madhouses; the patient was strapped to this and spun round at a terrific rate so as to cause the demon to be cast out. But demons were not always so rudely turned out into the void, they were sometimes provided with alternative accommodation. However, ejected by violence or persuasion, the services of a magician using visible or invisible means were almost invariably essential—the witch-doctor of antiquity or the witch and the exorcist of later ages. The witch has always been unpopular, having acquired the reputation of exercising her powers for evil and of being allied with the devil himself. Many are the tales in folk-lore and fairy-legend of the conflict between the good fairy and the witch; but there are also many stories of a sinister character telling of the malignity of reputed witches and of the savage ferocity with which they were repressed. That witches were not always wholly successful in the practice of their arts is indicated by the following account from Frazer :—

"In 1590 a Scotch witch of the name of Agnes Sampson was convicted of curing a certain Robert Kers of a disease laid upon him by a westland warlock when he was in Dumfries, whilk sickness she took upon herself and kept the same with great groaning and torment till the morn, at whilk time there was a great din in the house. The noise was made by the witch in her effort to shift the disease from herself to a dog. Unfortunately the attempt partly miscarried; the disease missed the dog and hit Alexander Douglas of Dalkeith, who dwined and died, while the original patient was made whole."

Witch-doctors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Scotland claimed to be able to cause and to prevent an easy childbirth and to cast the labour pains

on an animal or a human being; and, as Lévy-Bruhl remarks, husbands who were made the victims were particularly incensed against these midwives.

This belief in the transference of ills is of hoary antiquity, and is exemplified in a number of the so-called charmings still practised by superstitious persons. Lady Wilde records a charm for mumps being carried out by rubbing the child's head on the back of a pig and so transferring the disease to the animal. Wickwar tells a story of an old man crippled with rheumatism attending a wake in Donegal, going over to the corpse and taking its hand and laying this on his shoulder, arm and leg, and saying, "Take my pains with you, Thady, in the name of God."

One day some years ago, when in Arboe, looking at the beautiful old stone cross there, my eye was caught by the strange appearance of the trunk of a nearby tree, the bark of which appeared to be growing a beard of bristles. On closer inspection I found that these were pins—common pins, safety pins, drawing pins, and pins of every conceivable variety—literally thousands upon thousands of them. Inquiry revealed that this was a holy tree upon which suppliants while inserting pins wished away their ills and besought benefits. The ancient Romans somewhat similarly drove nails into a column in the temple of Jupiter. After they had done what they could and all else had failed, they symbolically pinned the responsibility for the final outcome upon the god of the sacred tree or upon Jupiter himself.

Until comparatively recently the application of orthodox medicine was confined within narrow limits. The services of physicians were inaccessible to the vast majority of the people, as doctors were few in number and naturally enough frequented cities and other centres of learning. The scattered communities outside these areas had no resort when ill but to the native folk-medicine or perhaps to the medicine-chest of the chief of the clan, or in later years of the local squire or clergyman; or they fell an easy prey to the vagrant quacks and itinerant drug-vendors.

The patrician medicine as exemplified by Cato of old was illustrated even in the life of the present British Prime Minister, who, according to an account in a Sunday newspaper of recent date, when running a plantation in the Bahamas treated the wounds and illnesses of his workers and showed his resource when the anti-rheumatism remedy ran out by substituting anti-insect bite lotion.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the seventeenth century philosopher and ambassador to the Court of France, gives in his autobiography an interesting account of his amateur adventures in medicine, from which the following extracts are quoted :—

"It will become a gentleman to have some knowledge in medicine . . . as this art will get a gentleman not only much knowledge but much credit. It will also become him to know not only the ingredients, but doses of certain cathartic or emetic medicines . . . Besides I would have a gentleman know how to make these medicines himself, it being the manner of apothecaries so frequently to put in the succedanea, that no man is sure to find with them medicines made with the true drugs which ought to enter into the composition when it is exotic or rare; or when they are extant in the shop, no man can be assured that the said

drugs are not rotten. I have studied this art very much, and have in cases of extremity ministered physic with that success which is strange." He then describes some of his cures, and goes on to give his sources of information, mentioning among others the London, Paris, and Amsterdam Pharmacopœias, "for as they are set forth by authority of the physicians of those several countries what they all ordain must necessarily be effective." We may note this tribute to our profession by a gentleman who before undertaking the treatment of a patient always assured himself that the physicians had given up the case. One would like to attribute this to an observance of etiquette, but the context engenders a suspicion of personal vanity.

Quackery has existed in every country and at every time since any distinction was drawn between regular practitioners of medicine and pretenders to the art. It cannot have been unknown in the far-off pre-Christian days in Ireland, as the Brehon Law imposes a penalty on any unauthorised person treating illness without disclosing first that he is unqualified. I have no means of knowing how much the ancient Irishman shared in the now widespread enthusiasm for the unqualified practitioner. Indeed the veneration in which unorthodox medicine is held simply because it is unorthodox offers a field for inquiry and speculation. You may have noticed an account of a case which came before a court in Hungary last year. A young man practising as a quack was prosecuted for signing a death certificate; he admitted the act and reluctantly revealed a closely guarded secret—he was really a qualified doctor who had failed to attract patients, so he had moved to another address and, while continuing to use his medical knowledge quite properly, had built up a successful practice on the prestige that comes from being non-academic and non-scientific.

Quackery was found in Greece and prevailed in Rome. In the ninth century of our era Rhazes of Bagdad commented on the success in Western Asia of quacks and charlatans in securing popularity often denied to the competent and qualified physicians. The extent of quackery in the Middle Ages is indicated by Henri de Mondeville, surgeon to Philippe le Bel, who wrote in the beginning of the fourteenth century : "Kings, princes, prelates, dukes, noblemen, and burgesses dabble without knowledge in dangerous surgical treatments of the eye. The vulgar say that these have their knowledge infused into them by the pure grace of the Creator."

Some of the present-day lay writers on medical subjects possibly derive their inspiration in the same way. One is inclined to wonder, however, if it was pure grace that inspired a distinguished musician last year to publish an attack on the medical profession in a book with such chapter headings as PECULIAR PSYCHOLOGY OF DOCTORS, NURSING HOMES A MENACE TO INVALIDS, THE GERM FETISH, and THE CAUSE OF CANCER DISCOVERED BUT IGNORED.

That quacks frequented London in the fourteenth century and that their presence was not always welcome is evident from Stow's Chronicle which was written in 1382, and which records that "a counterfeit physician was set on horseback face to tail with a collar of jordans about his neck led by the hangman through London

with the beating of basons and then whipped and banished."

Notwithstanding the edict of Henry VIII in 1511 for the regulation of the practice of medicine and for the suppression of quacks, and the imposition of imprisonment and fines, quackery was not quelled; and the proclamation of James I accompanied by similar punishments was little more effective.

The golden age of quackery in England was centered in the Stuart times, and many of the quacks in London gained not only notoriety but even attained to the favour of royalty, the patronage of the nobility, and the notice of the great writers of the day. One obtained a licence to practise from the Archbishop of Canterbury, another from the Bishop of London. Three became oculists to royalty, and two were knighted. Another appears to have the distinction of publishing the first synopsis of medicine in English, as prior to this time orthodox books on medicine had been written in Latin. Indeed the practice of quackery had become so profitable that even a licentiate of the College of Physicians abandoned legitimate medicine for the art of the quack.

The claims of some of the quacks for their nostrums do not appear to have been too extravagant for the credulity of their dupes, although they are sufficiently amazing. The one just mentioned sold "a pill scarcely discernible without a microscope, yet so mighty in its operation that it will raise the weakest out of his bed and make him strong enough in two minutes to encounter conscience, death, and the devil," and a pulvis vermifugis that brought away "worms as long as the maypole in the Strand, though confessedly not so thick." Another who lived about the same time advertised that he had obtained the recipe for his preparation from Paracelsus, who had tried the medicine on an old hen and then on his aged housekeeper with the result that youth and all its functions were restored.

There were also some notable exponents of quackery among the women of those days. Sarah Mapp, the daughter of a country bonesetter, achieved fame and fortune in London in the first part of the eighteenth century, and one of her patients was the niece of Sir Hans Sloane. Johanna Stephens must have been a remarkable woman, as she succeeded in persuading the British Parliament in the year 1738 to pay £5,000 for the secret of her quack remedy for the stone. This consisted of preparations of eggshell, snails, soap and honey, and a few vegetable ingredients such as hips and haws—a poor return for the money.

Royalty even does not appear to have wholly escaped the lure of dabbling in quackery. James IV of Scotland, who had a leaning towards medical knowledge, seems to have performed operations for cataract—not always successful, for there is a record relating to his payment of thirteen shillings to a blind woman who, it may be presumed, had suffered at his hands.

Quackery is far from extinct. Human nature is as easily gulled to-day as ever by bold assertions. The advance in education has brought with it methods equally advanced. The picturesque adventurer with his voluble harangue and his flamboyant bills has been replaced by a nebulous group using the more subtly psychological newspaper advertisements, and the rewards have multiplied exceedingly.

As Bridges the physician poet-laureate wrote in "The Testament of Beauty":

"Time eateth away at many an old delusion,
yet with civilisation delusions make head."

Many even of the official remedies in the Stuart times and early Georgian days astound us now, and the first London Pharmacopœia published in 1618 must have read like a museum catalogue, with its swallows, vipers, scorpions, worms, ants, and so on. The apothecary's shop too must have been a veritable den of curiosities, for Garth, the physician and poet, writes:—

"Here mummies lie most reverently stale,
And there the tortoise hangs her coat of mail;
Not far from some huge shark's devouring head
The flying fish their finney pinions spread;
Aloft in rows large poppy heads are strung,
And near a scaly alligator hung."

Not only did the physicians believe in treating their patients with what seem to us startling remedies, but they often gave these in full measure and flowing over. Charles II during his fatal illness, which lasted about a couple of days, was bled and cupped repeatedly; treated with purgatives, emetics and sternutatories; dosed with two score medicines and Raleigh's antidote, which contained as many more; then with powdered bezoar stone, and finally with a remedy which he had often prepared in his private laboratory—essence of human skull; so medical science having like the patient become exhausted, he expired with a blister to the crown of his head and a plaster of burgundy pitch and pigeon's dung to the soles of his feet.

On the other hand, an equally remarkable parsimony was sometimes exhibited. The "everlasting" pill, composed of a small globule of metallic antimony, was believed to have the property of purging as often as it was swallowed. A story is told of a lady who, having taken one of these and being alarmed at its non-appearance, received the comforting reassurance from her physician that it had already passed through a hundred patients without difficulty.

However, as authority was questioned and as knowledge was advanced by scientific investigation, the Pharmacopœia was from time to time cleared of its obvious blemishes. Remedies derived from the animal kingdom are now few, but a slight increase in the number was made in the last two editions, not however until the most searching investigation had demonstrated their worth.

Still, modern science sometimes surprises us by finding justification for an old treatment which we have been disposed to scorn. The ancient Chinese gave powdered toads for heart-disease; we have recently discovered that powdered toad contains a lot of adrenalin. Science now tells us that vibrations can be stilled by counter-vibrations, and that toothache which is due to vibrations can be counteracted by vibrations transmitted through a headphone fitted over the mastoid; so perhaps old Sequah's band had some therapeutic value after all.

"Our knowledge," says Gerald Heard, "has frowned upon idle curiosity, thus canalizing our energies until they can only attend to what pays. To-day we see

the pressing and ever more pressing need of pure interest." It is only as a matter of pure interest that I have offered you some results of my idle curiosity, my wanderings in some of the by-ways of medicine, and especially where those by-ways cross and re-cross the shifting border between magic and the natural sciences, between imagination and reality. The most grotesque guess of yesterday may be an established truth to-morrow.

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REVIEW

CHEMICAL ANALYSIS FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS. By R. E. Illingworth, Ph.D., B.Sc. 1938. E. & S. Livingstone. Pp. 152. Price 5s. net.

This little book contains an extraordinary amount of information in a short space; information of the very kind needed by medical students to gain a true appreciation of their work in the chemical laboratory. It is divided into three parts: qualitative inorganic analysis, quantitative organic analysis, and volumetric analysis, with a useful appendix containing equations of reactions used in volumetric analysis, moleculare and atomic weights, logarithms and anti-logarithms. The subject matter is clear and to the point, and the author is to be congratulated on his methods of expression. There is a foreword by Professor George Barger, Regius Professor of Chemistry in the University of Glasgow.